APRIL 2019 AT A GLIMPSE

Apr 3rd	Morning Bird Walk
Apr 6th	FoCP Nature Walk/Members Day Trip
Apr 10th	Morning Bird Walk
Apr 13th	FoNA Tree Walk
Apr 17th	Morning Bird Walk
Apr 20th	FoCP Nature Walk
Apr 21st	Sunday Bird Watch
Apr 24th	Morning Bird Walk

Bird ringing every Tuesday morning (check with Ornithology section, National Museums).

Birders Please Note! The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet at 8:30 am at the Nairobi National Museum. Transport is on a self-help basis. The group meets in the courtyard of the Nairobi National Museum, past the entrance to the galleries. We normally return at about 12:30 pm.

The Sunday Birdwatch on the THIRD Sunday of each month now also meets at 8:30 am, at the same location. It is a day trip; please bring water and lunch.

Mombasa Birdwalks On the 3rd Saturday of each month. For meeting time and place, please contact Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540; or Doris Schaule <dorischaule@gmail.com> / 0722-277752. Or check Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

Contact the office for information on other birdwalks in Kakamega, Kisumu, and other sites

Ngong Forest walks - 1st and 3rd Saturday at 9.00 am. Contact Simon 0729-840715

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS BIOLOGY COURSE

VENUE:
Invertebrate Zoology Labarotory, Nairobi National Museum
This course has been organized by the Kenya Herpatofauna Working Group
For registration and inquiries:
Call **+254 (0) 20 3637568, +254 (0) 780 149200, +254 (0) 771343138**
or send an email to **office@naturekenya.org**
Registration payment can also be made through Mpesa:
Business number **100300**, Account name **Reptile Course 2019**

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Donations can be made through:
MPESA PAY BILL - Business Number: **100300**, A/C Name: **COTF2019**
CHEQUE - Payable to **Nature Kenya** and posted to P.O. Box 44486-00100 or hand-delivered to the Nature Kenya offices
CREDIT/DEBIT CARD - At the Nature Kenya offices located at the National Museums of Kenya, Museum Hill

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Student	1,200
Schools, Clubs	1,500
Corporates	20,000 -30,000

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- Select **'Pay Bill'**
- Enter business number **100300**
- Enter account number **(put your lapsed membership number or write new member)**
- Enter the amount, enter your PIN
- Confirm details & press OK

For details on associated groups such as Youth Committee, Succulenta, and Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, City Park or Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, contact office@naturekenya.org

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CFAs monitor biodiversity to conserve Mt. Kenya Forest

PHOTO BY JAMES MUTUNGA

Community forest association (CFA) members conducting biodiversity monitoring in Mt. Kenya.

BY JOHN MWACHARO

Humans are dependent on the biodiversity and services provided by key ecosystems such as forests. Sustainable management of these important ecosystems is therefore critical for our survival. What better way to safeguard these ecosystems than to actively engage local communities in their conservation?

In Mt. Kenya forest, for instance, local communities are increasingly getting involved in biodiversity conservation. Through community forest associations (CFAs), local people have not only been restoring degraded forest areas but also monitoring biodiversity in their respective areas. All this is thanks to a series of ongoing trainings that seek to enhance the CFAs' capacity to sustainably manage and conserve forests using a participatory approach.

Mt. Kenya forest is an irreplaceable biodiversity hotspot with unique flora and fauna of conservation importance, which underpins its Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) status and the extant government protection. The forest is a cornerstone of Kenya's economy through provision of varied socio-economic and ecosystem services; Mt. Kenya forest is a major carbon sink and a major water tower. However, the forest is continually experiencing serious degradation mainly due to deforestation. Building the capacity of forest adjacent communities (CFAs) in Mt. Kenya forest to develop and adopt locally driven conservation initiatives and forest disturbance monitoring can leverage a rollback on the adverse impacts of the human-related threats.

In February, Nature Kenya conducted site-based training for seven CFAs (Chehe, Ragati, Hombe, Kabaru, Naromoru, Gathiuru and Ngare Ndare Trust) stationed in Mt. Kenya West. The training's main aim was to build the CFAs' capacity on participatory biodiversity and forest disturbance monitoring by enhancing members' monitoring skills, creating a positive attitude towards biodiversity monitoring and empowering the communities to detect and report trends in forest threats. Common threats identified by the communities during the training include forest fire outbreaks, illegal logging, overgrazing, pollution of water bodies, illegal game hunting, degradation of riparian areas and over exploitation of forest products.

At each site, participants were engaged in developing a monitoring protocol, setting up of a monitoring transect and practicing on the filling of data capture forms. A total of 35 people from the CFAs participated in the training. The participants agreed to be conducting biodiversity and forest disturbance monitoring twice a year (in May and September).

Promotion of participatory forest and biodiversity monitoring in Mt. Kenya is anticipated to enhance the local community's ability to detect and report changes and threats to forest and wildlife populations for appropriate remedial action. This was recently witnessed during a forest fire outbreak in Mt. Kenya. Members of various CFAs in the region were at hand to offer assistance in containing the inferno. Kenya Forest Service (KFS) acknowledged the CFAs' support in fighting the forest fires, noting that without them things would have been much worse. According to KFS, more that 90 CFA members were actively involved in fighting the fires.

Nature Kenya, with support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and the Darwin Initiative, has partnered with the private sector and CFAs to plant 100,000 indigenous trees to restore degraded sections of the Mt. Kenya Forest KBA. This initiative seeks strategic commitment and support from the business sector to enhance the quantity and quality of water flowing from Mt. Kenya.

109TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

VENUE
Louis Leakey Hall, Nairobi Museum

DATE Wednesday 8th May 2019 **TIME** 12:00 - 2:00pm

AGENDA & PROGRAM

12:00pm Coffee/tea and quick lunch
1:00pm Convene in hall

- Minutes of the 108th AGM
- Matters arising from the Minutes
- Chairman's Report
- Honorary Treasurer's Report
- Appointment of Auditor
- Library, Journal, Committees and Projects Report
- Any other business of which due notice in the form of the Resolution to be proposed has been given to the Honorary Secretary, signed by not less than 2 members, not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting
- Election of Office Bearers, Members of the Executive Committee, and Trustees

Nomination forms for office bearers or Executive Committee members may be collected from the office or requested by e-mail.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FREEPIK.COM

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Wind Energy and Biodiversity in Kenya

BY JOHN KIPTUM AND SERAH MUNGUTI

Set in the right locations, wind power is a clean, green energy source with low environmental impacts. In the wrong places, it can be a serious threat to biodiversity, especially for certain bird and bat species. Understanding where such conflicts could arise is thus crucial to planning for wind power development.

Last month, the Ministry of Energy convened a consultative meeting on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Wind Power and Biodiversity in Kenya at the Nairobi National Museum. The meeting brought together participants drawn from government authorities and state corporations in the environment and energy sectors, civil society and private sector agencies (both investors and wind power developers).

"The Wind Energy and Biodiversity SEA seeks to identify places critical for the survival of bird species likely to be affected by wind power. It also seeks to identify areas of low biodiversity risk for wind power development; and propose mitigation measures and other management actions that will align with international good practice. The process will make it easier to save nature as we address our quest to grow our economy through wind energy" said Dr. Matiku, Executive Director, Nature Kenya.

The SEA is being supported by USAID through its Power Africa program implemented by Tetra Tech. Tetra Tech has contracted The Biodiversity Consultancy (TBC) to lead the SEA process. The Kenya Bird Conservation Consortium (Nature Kenya, BirdLife International and The Peregrine Fund) is working in partnership with the TBC.

The meeting presented key findings and initial recommendations of the draft Wind Power and Biodiversity SEA. This included updating of sector players on progress that The Biodiversity Consultancy (TBC) and partners have achieved in terms of work done so far, preliminary results, challenges and plan.

The findings indicated that most areas with high potential for wind power are also key habitats and migratory routes for birds and bats, among other biodiversity. There is therefore need to apply caution when setting up wind farms in such areas to avert negative effects to biodiversity. Mitigation hierarchy principles (avoidance of sensitive areas, minimization of impacts, restoration of impacted biodiversity and offsetting to ensure net biodiversity gain) and SEA recommendations need to be applied to ensure that wind power projects are indeed 'green'.

The development of the SEA for Wind Power and Biodiversity was applauded by stakeholders present as a timely process which will promote development of sustainable wind power energy in Kenya. According to Mr. Paul Mbuthi, the Senior Assistant Director, Renewable Energy, in the Ministry of Energy, the SEA is a useful instrument in policy formulation and implementation by integrating biodiversity considerations into decisions that relate to wind power development. He reiterated that though energy is one of the key enablers of national development, biodiversity conservation remains a matter of national priority for any meaningful sustainable development to be realized.

Forest fires: Nature Kenya helps Kenya Forest Service to respond

Nature Kenya has donated firefighting equipment worth Ksh.400,000 to the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to help curb forest fires across the country. The equipment, comprising of 50 knapsack sprayers, was handed over to KFS at KFS headquarters in Karura Forest last month by Paul Gacheru – the species and sites manager – on behalf of Nature Kenya.

Knapsack sprayers are used for fighting low intensity fires or hot spots and for mopping up after fires have been extinguished. The donation was Nature Kenya's contribution to KFS following the forest fire outbreak in Mt. Kenya.

Receiving the knapsack sprayers, KFS Commandant Alex Lemarkoko thanked Nature Kenya for the generous gesture: "Thank you for heeding our request to our stakeholders to support us in responding to this menace that has already affected more than 750,000 ha so far this year within forest areas across the country."

The Commandant noted that KFS was working closely with Nature Kenya to monitor forest areas through jointly developing programs and monitoring systems. He added that the fire fighting equipment would go a long way in supporting KFS' response and fire suppression activities.

"We still have fires raging in a number of our forest areas, mainly Mau, Cherengani, Mt. Elgon, the Aberdares and Mt. Kenya ecosystems. These sprayers donated today will be distributed immediately to the needy stations to be used during this fire season," he said. Mr. Lemarkoko called on other well-wishers to support KFS' conservation efforts.

PHOTO BY JOY KWENDO

Presentation of the knapsack sprayers to KFS.

For updates visit
www.naturekeny.org

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A rare bird at the museum!

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Nairobi National Museum is an excellent bird-watching site, especially for beginners. In late February and early March, however, it was drawing experts and amateurs alike from far and wide – to see a Pied Flycatcher, the first record for Nairobi!

The European Pied Flycatcher is a small bird, black and white in colour – appearing brown and white in full sunlight. It nests in Europe and northwestern Africa, and normally migrates to West Africa in the cold season. In Kenya, a vagrant Pied Flycatcher was seen in 1965 in Kakamega Forest. More recently, Pied Flycatcher were recorded in Kakamega forest by Bern de Bruijn in 2002, and two sightings by Nathan Hentz and James Bradley in 2017.

This year, two sightings came almost simultaneously: On February 24, David Guarnieri and Ben Mugambi saw three Pied Flycatchers on Mount Elgon. And on February 27, Kevin Gichuki found the bird at the Nairobi National Museum botanic garden, the first record east of the Rift Valley!

Kevin Gichuki alerted other birders who rushed to the museum. At first it was thought to be a Semi-collared Flycatcher, another migratory bird that occasionally passes through Kenya. However, photos taken by John Mwacharo, Sidney Shema and other birders and quickly shared revealed the bird as a European Pied Flycatcher.

The records have now been sent to the East African Rarities Committee for approval. More than five records will mean that Pied Flycatcher is no longer a rarity for Kenya – but it's still a rarity in Nairobi! The Pied Flycatcher seemed comfortable at the museum, and was seen again and again until mid-March.

PHOTO BY JOHN MWACHARO

The European Pied Flycatcher that was spotted at the Nairobi National Museum grounds.

April 2019 Skies

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

This column points out the brightest stars and planets and most distinctive constellations in the early evening and predawn skies. You will see many more stars on a clear night in a dark location away from urban lights. It's safe to use binoculars to look at the moon, planets and stars. It's only the sun that you must avoid.

There are many good websites that provide more in-depth information. At earthsky.org you can even subscribe to a free daily e-mail newsletter. Remember however that here near the equator, the stars and planets will appear in a slightly different position.

April Stars

Sirius, the night's brightest star, is high in the southwest, and Canopus, second brightest, below it in the south. Sirius is called the Dog Star – imagine Sirius as the dog's eye, and look for bright stars forming a paw below, and a paw and tail to the east (left). The Little Dog – the bright star Procyon – is high overhead.

The constellation Orion – Hunter or Warrior – walks towards the west. North (right) of Orion is the reddish star Aldebaran. Further west (lower in the sky), the planet Mars is near the star cluster Pleiades or Seven Sisters in the first week of April. High above, in the northwest, two sets of two stars form the constellation Gemini, the Twins. The crescent moon is near Mars and Aldebaran on April 9, near the star Alhena in Gemini on the 11th and near bright Pollux in Gemini on the 13th.

High in the northeast, the bright star Regulus is at the heart of the constellation Leo the lion. The moon is near Regulus on April 15 and near the blue-white star Spica on the 19th.

Two iconic constellations rise in the east on April evenings. The Plough or Big Dipper is low in the northeast. Crux, the Southern Cross, is low in the southeast.

Morning Sky

Four of the visible planets are in the predawn sky. Golden Jupiter rises in the east during the evening and sails across the sky during the night, escorting the constellation of the Scorpion. With binoculars on a clear, dark night, you may see up to four of Jupiter's moons as bright dots on each side of the planet. The moon is near the star Antares, the Scorpion's fiery eye, on April 22, and near Jupiter on the 23rd and 24th.

The planet Saturn, much fainter, is high in the east at dawn. Brilliant Venus is now low in the sky above the sunrise. Little Mercury rises above the horizon, but does not quite reach Venus. The moon is near Saturn on April 25 & 26, and near Venus on May 2 & 3.

Moon, April 2019

April 5 – new moon. Look for a slender crescent in the west on the 6th. April 12 – first quarter ("half" moon overhead at sunset). April 19 – full moon. April 26 – last quarter ("half" moon overhead at dawn).

Wednesday Morning Birdwalk at Lower Kabete PHOTOS BY JOY KWENDO